

Doing Emancipation Differently: Transgression, Equality and the Politics of Learning

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Introduction: Education and the promise of freedom

The question that lies at the basis of this paper is a simple one: Is education (just) about the reproduction of what already exists, or can it (still) have an orientation towards freedom? The word 'still' is important here, as it puts the connection between education and freedom in a historical perspective. But it is not there to suggest that in the past education was a matter of freedom and that this now may no longer be the case. The connection between education and freedom rather has a more precise history in which the Enlightenment signifies an important 'turning point.' Whereas, roughly speaking, up to the Enlightenment education was predominantly something for those who were *already* free, from the Enlightenment onwards education increasingly becomes conceived as itself a liberating process, a process aimed at the *realisation of freedom*, that is, a process of emancipation. By referring to freedom as a 'promise' I wish to highlight that the connection between education and emancipation is not a simple and straightforward one. While it is one thing to suggest that education ought to have an orientation towards freedom, it is quite another to figure out how this promise might actually be fulfilled. The issues here are not only practical, but also have to do with the way in which we understand freedom – and for that matter 'unfreedom' – and the educational trajectory that might bring about the shift from 'unfreedom' to freedom (if this shift is indeed what emancipation is about; see below). In this paper I wish to make a modest contribution to this discussion, firstly, by reconstructing some of the main ways in which the connection between education and emancipation has been conceived and, secondly, by problematising two central assumptions of what I will characterise as the modern 'logic' of emancipation. One assumption concerns the role of truth in emancipation; the other concerns the status of (in)equality. With the help of Foucault and Rancière I will aim to articulate an understanding of emancipation that is not based on the possibility of objective truth about the human condition and that no longer conceives of emancipation as a transition from a state of inequality to a state of equality. Doing so will not only give us a different outlook on emancipation – and my suggestion here will be that this outlook makes it possible to address some of the problems inherent in the

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modern 'logic' of emancipation. It also positions the role of learning in emancipation differently, and thus hints at a different connection between education and emancipation than how it has been conceived under the modern emancipatory 'logic.'

The modern 'logic' of emancipation

Although the idea of emancipation goes back to Roman times where it denoted the freeing of a child or wife from the legal authority of the 'pater familias,' the educational interest in emancipation has its roots in the writings of Enlightenment authors such as Immanuel Kant. Kant defined enlightenment as "man's [sic] release from his self-incurred tutelage" and saw tutelage or immaturity as "man's [sic] inability to make use of his understanding without the direction from another" (Kant 1992[1784], p.90). Enlightenment thus entailed a process of becoming independent or autonomous and for Kant this autonomy was based on the use of one's reason. Kant contributed two further ideas to this line of thinking. First of all he argued that the "propensity and vocation to free thinking" was not a contingent, historical possibility, but should be seen as something that was an inherent part of human nature. It was man's "ultimate destination" and the "aim of his existence," as it was put in his lectures on education (Kant 1982, p. 701; my translation), so that to block progress in enlightenment was "a crime against human nature" (Kant 1992[1784], p.93). Secondly, Kant argued that in order for this 'capacity' to emerge, we need education. Thus we can read that the human being can only become human – that is a rational autonomous being – "through education" (Kant 1982, p.669; my translation). "Der Mensch kann nur Mensch werden durch Erziehung."

From this point onwards we can trace the history of emancipation along two, related lines: one is educational, the other philosophical. The idea that education is not about the insertion of the individual into the existing order but entails an orientation towards autonomy and freedom played an important role in the establishment of education as an academic discipline in Germany towards the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century (see Biesta 2011b). It also was a central element in 'Reformpädagogik,' 'New Education,' and 'Progressive Education,' which emerged in the first decades of the 20th century in many countries. In most cases the argument against adaptation was expressed as an argument for the child. Many educationalists followed Rousseau's insight that adaptation to

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the external societal order would corrupt the child. This led to the idea that a choice for the child could only mean a choice *against* society. This was further supported by theories which conceived of 'the child' as a natural category, a 'given,' and not as something that had to be understood in social, historical and political terms.

Whereas the idea that education is about the emancipation of the individual child helped the development of education as an academic discipline, the limitations of this view became painfully clear when it turned out that such an approach could easily be adopted by different ideological systems, including Nazism and fascism. This is why, after the Second World War, educationalists – first of all in Germany – began to argue that there can be no individual emancipation without wider societal transformation. This became the central tenet of critical approaches to education. In Germany a major contribution came from Klaus Mollenhauer, whose critical-emancipatory approach drew inspiration from the (early) work of Jürgen Habermas (see Mollenhauer 1976). Two decades later, but with precursors in the writings of authors like John Dewey, George Counts and Paulo Freire, a similar body of work emerged in North America, particularly through the contributions of Michael Apple, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren. As a critical theory of education the emancipatory interest of critical pedagogies focuses on the analysis of oppressive structures, practices and theories. The key idea is that emancipation can be brought about if people gain an adequate insight into the power relations that constitute their situation – which is why the notion of 'demystification' plays a central role in critical pedagogies.

It is here that we can link up with the history of emancipation in philosophy, at least to the extent to which this history is part of the development of Marxism and neo-Marxist philosophy. It is, after all, a key insight of this tradition that in order to liberate ourselves from the oppressive workings of power and achieve emancipation, we first and foremost need to *expose* how power operates. What the Marxist tradition adds to this – and this, in turn, has influenced critical and emancipatory pedagogies – is the notion of *ideology*. Although the question of the exact meaning of this concept is a topic of ongoing debates (see Eagleton 2007), one of the crucial insights expressed in the concept of ideology is not only that all thought is socially determined – following Karl Marx's dictum that "(i)t is not the consciousness of man that determines their being but, on the contrary, their social being that determines

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their consciousness" (Marx, quoted in Eagleton 2007, p.80) – but also, and more importantly, that ideology is thought "which *denies* this determination" (ibid., p.89). The latter claim is linked to Friedrich Engels's notion of false consciousness: the idea that "the real motives impelling [the agent] remain unknown to him" (Engels, quoted in Eagleton 2007, p.89). The predicament of ideology lies in the claim that it is precisely because of the way in which power works upon our consciousness, that we are unable to see how power works upon our consciousness. This not only implies that in order to free ourselves from the workings of power we need to expose how power works upon our consciousness. It also means that in order for us to achieve emancipation, *someone else*, whose consciousness is not subjected to the workings of power, needs to provide us with an account of our objective condition (on this theme see also Honig 2003). According to this line of thought, therefore, emancipation is ultimately contingent upon the truth about our objective condition, a truth that can only be generated by someone who is positioned outside of the influence of ideology – and in the Marxist tradition this position is considered either to be occupied by science or by philosophy.

Emancipatory education: Monological and dialogical

The educational 'translation' of this 'logic' of emancipation basically takes two forms, one which can be characterised as *monological* and one which can be characterised as *dialogical*. The monological approach is the most direct translation of the ideas outlined above. It relies on the assumption that emancipation requires an intervention from the outside; an intervention, moreover, by someone who is not subjected to the power that needs to be overcome. Thus emancipation appears as something that is *done to* somebody and hence relies on a fundamental *inequality* between the emancipator and the one to be emancipated. Equality, on this account, becomes the outcome of emancipation; it becomes something that lies in the future. Moreover, it is this outcome which is used to legitimise the interventions of the emancipator. This is a 'logic' of emancipatory education in which the teacher knows and students do not know yet; where it is the task of the teacher to explain the world to the students and where it is the task of the students to ultimately become as knowledgeable as the teacher. In this set-up there is a clear learning task for the student; a task that is basically *reproductive* in that it is aimed at the acquisition of the insights of the teacher-emancipator.

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It is one of the main achievements of Paulo Freire to have provided a dialogical alternative in which emancipation is no longer seen as a process of truth-telling by the teacher-emancipator – Freire's notion of 'banking education' – but where it becomes a process of the collective discovery of oppressive structures, processes and practices, a process in which teacher and students are positioned as 'co-subjects' (Freire 1972, p. 135). Freire characterises oppression as the situation in which individuals are disconnected from the world and exist as objects of the oppressor's actions rather than as subjects of their own actions. Oppression is thus understood as a process of 'dehumanisation' that occurs when people's original ways of 'being-in-praxis' are disrupted or suppressed (see *ibid.*). Emancipation on this account is aimed at restoring the connection between human beings and the world; or, in Freire's vocabulary: restoring *praxis*. The role of the teacher in this process is to re-instigate dialogical and reflective practices which in turn re-initiate praxis and connect people back to the world (see *ibid.*, p.30). For Freire emancipation therefore also involves learning. The learning is, however, not reproductive but constructive or generative, albeit that it still has an orientation towards truth. Unlike in the monological model this is *not* the truth given by the teacher to students about their objective condition on the assumption that students are unable to acquire such insights themselves. It rather is the outcome of collective processes of learning and discovery. While Freire believes, therefore, that students have the capacity to generate such understandings themselves – through collective learning processes with teachers – his wider emancipatory project still relies on a truth about oppression and its overcoming; a truth, we might say, about what *real* human existence looks like (see also Galloway in press).

While we shouldn't deny the positive work that has been done through both monological and dialogical approaches to educational emancipation, this does not mean that these approaches are without problems. One problem has to do with the role of truth – and while there are significant differences between the monological and dialogical approach both approaches ultimately rely on the possibility of objective truth. The other problem has to do with the position of equality and more specifically with the idea that emancipation is to be understood as a trajectory that leads from inequality to equality. In the next two sections I will discuss these problems in more detail in order then to outline how emancipation can be understood differently if we do not base it on truth and if we do not conceive of it as a trajectory from inequality to equality. My guides here will be Foucault and Rancière.

Doing emancipation differently: From demystification to transgression

Although I have shown that truth occupies a slightly different position in the two approaches, both approaches ultimately rely on the possibility of truth and, more specifically, on the possibility of truth uncontaminated by power. In the monological approach this has to do with the fact that emancipation is seen as a process of overcoming ideological distortions. Here emancipation operates as a process of *demystification*. In the dialogical approach emancipation is the process that restores true human existence – or in Freirean language: true human *praxis*. In both cases, so we might say, truth is needed to overcome alienation, either the alienation produced by false consciousness or the alienation brought about by oppression. Yet for truth to be able to do this 'work,' it has to be assumed that truth and power are fundamentally disconnected – and one could indeed argue that this distinction is foundational for the modern project of Enlightenment (see, for example, Habermas 1990).

One author who has challenged this very assumption is Michel Foucault. He has argued that power and knowledge *never* occur separately but always come together – something expressed in what, following Derrida (1982, p.13), we might call the 'neographism' of 'power/knowledge.' Foucault has indeed explicitly argued that we should abandon “the whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can only exist where the power relations are suspended” (Foucault 1975, p. 27). Yet to argue that we have to abandon this particular tradition is not to suggest that change is no longer possible and freedom has become an illusion. It rather is to highlight that we are always operating *within* power/knowledge ‘constellations’ – that is, of power/knowledge versus power/knowledge – and not of knowledge versus power or power versus knowledge. There is, therefore, potential for action, change and critique, but we have to understand this in terms that are fundamentally different from the idea that emancipation is an *escape* from power.

Foucault actually agrees with Enlightenment thinkers such as Kant that criticism “consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits” (Foucault 1984, p.45). But “if the Kantian question was that of knowing what limits knowledge had to renounce transgressing, (...) the critical question today has to be turned back into a positive one: in what is given to us as universal,

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necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? (ibid.) In some of his work Foucault has referred to this approach as 'eventalization' (see Foucault 1991, p.76). He defines eventalization as the process of "making visible a singularity at places where there is a temptation to invoke a historical constant, an immediate anthropological trait, or an obviousness which imposes itself uniformly on all." (ibid.). Eventalization works "by constructing around the singular event ... a 'polygon' or rather a 'polyhedron' of intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance and can never properly be taken as finite" (ibid., p.77). Eventalization thus means to *complicate* and to *pluralize* our understanding of events, their elements, their relations and their domains of reference (see ibid.).

This means – and this is a significant difference – that eventalization does not result in a 'deeper' understanding, an understanding of 'underlying' structures or causes. In this respect eventalization precisely does *not* generate the kind of knowledge that will set us free from the workings of those structures or causes. But Foucault has been adamant that this does not mean that such analysis is without effect. What eventalization does *not* generate, so he has argued, is advice or guidelines or instructions as to what is to be done. But what it can bring about is a situation in which people "'no longer know what they do,' so that the acts, gestures, discourses which up until then had seemed to go without saying become problematic, difficult, dangerous" – and this effect, so he argues, is entirely *intentional* (ibid., p.84). Eventalization does therefore not result in a deeper or truer understanding of how power works, but instead tries to unsettle what is taken for granted, which explains why it does not produce recipes for action. Eventalization is therefore not meant to solve problems; it is not a kind of knowledge meant for 'social workers' or 'reformers' but rather for subjects who act (see ibid.). As Foucault explains:

Critique doesn't have to be the premise of a deduction which concludes: this then is what needs to be done. It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage of programming. It is a challenge directed to what is. (ibid., p.84)

Rather than to think of emancipation as an escape from power, Foucault thus envisages emancipation as “*practical* critique that takes the form of a possible transgression” (Foucault 1984, p.45; *emph. added*). The critical practice of transgression is not meant to overcome limits (not in the least because limits are not only constraining but always also enabling; see Simmons 1995, p.69). Transgression rather is the practical and experimental “illumination of limits” (see Foucault 1977, pp. 33-38; Boyne, 1990). Foucault's rejection of the founding distinction of modern Enlightenment, that is the distinction between truth and power, does therefore not imply the end of the possibility of emancipation or the end of the possibility of critique, but makes emancipation from an endeavour based on truth – either the truth to be given by the teacher-emancipator or the truth discovered through collective learning – into the practical task of *transgression*. Transgression means doing things differently in order to show – or to prove, as Foucault would say – that things *can* be different and that the way things are is not the way things necessarily should be. The emancipatory potential of transgression therefore lies in the possibility “of no longer being, doing, or thinking what we are, do, or think” – and in precisely this sense, Foucault suggests, “it is seeking to give a new impetus ... to the undefined work of freedom” (Foucault 1984, p.46).

With Foucault we can thus begin to see the contours of a different understanding of emancipation, one where emancipation is no longer an escape from power through demystification, but becomes a practice of transgression – the practical confrontation of different power/knowledge constellations – in order to show that things do not have to be the way they currently are. Instead of being an escape from power, emancipation thus becomes an escape from alleged obviousness and alleged taken-for-grantedness. There is critical work to be done in relation to this, but this is not a process of demystification, of speaking truth to power, but one of eventalization, that is of the *pluralisation* of truth. This also means that the role of learning in emancipation becomes a radically different one. In one sense we could say that if we follow Foucault there is no longer anything to learn, at least not if we see learning as the *condition for* emancipation. There is, to be more precise, nothing to learn about our objective condition because, if we follow Foucault, we have to give up the idea that we can make a distinction between our objective condition and our

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distorted understandings of this condition. Similarly there is nothing to learn about our true human existence because, if we follow Foucault, we have to give up the idea that there is one single true human existence – there are many, which is not to suggest, of course, that they are all of equal value or worth, nor that human existence is without limits. While there is, therefore, no longer the suggestion that a particular kind of learning, a learning that discloses truth, will result in emancipation, this doesn't mean that there is nothing to learn *from* transgression and pluralisation. But transgression and pluralisation come first, and what we learn from our engagement in such emancipatory experiments comes second. In this regard Foucault's approach does suggest a fundamentally different connection between learning and emancipation.

Doing emancipation differently: Starting from the assumption of equality

The second assumption shared by the monological and dialogical approach to emancipation has to do with the status of (in)equality, in that in both approaches emancipation is seen as the transition from a state of inequality to a state of equality. This is perhaps most visible in the monological approach which starts from the inequality between the teacher-emancipator who knows and the student who does not yet know and where the ideal outcome of the process is one where the student becomes equal to and as knowledgeable as the teacher. While Freire tries to overcome this particular inequality in his understanding of emancipation – which he does by criticising the banking approach of monological emancipation and by arguing instead that teacher and student should engage as co-subjects in a mutual learning process – the general emancipatory dynamic in Freire is also one that starts with the inequality of oppressors and oppressed and where the ambition is to achieve a situation of true human co-existence (praxis) where this inequality has been eradicated. And although, as I have suggested, Freire argues that teachers and students should engage as co-subjects, there is still a distinctive role for the teacher and even distinctive knowledge which the student does not yet possess, namely knowledge about 'true' or 'authentic' – that is unalienated and unoppressed – human existence.

While at one level it may seem obvious that emancipation is seen as the transition from inequality to equality, taking one's starting point in inequality – both for educational emancipation and political emancipation, if this distinction is meaningful – is not entirely

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without problems. We first of all might ask whether, if we start from a position of inequality, those to be emancipated will ever be able to catch up. The problem here has to do with the fact that the modern logic of emancipation puts a relationship of dependency at its very centre. The one to be emancipated is, after all, dependent upon the intervention of the emancipator, an intervention based upon knowledge that is fundamentally inaccessible to the one to be emancipated. This does raise the question when this dependency will actually disappear. Is it as soon as emancipation is achieved? Or should the one who is emancipated remain eternally grateful to his or her emancipator for the 'gift' of emancipation? Should slaves remain grateful to their masters for setting them free? Should women remain grateful to men for setting them free? Should children remain grateful to their parents for setting them free? Or could all of them perhaps have asked why they were not considered to be free in the first place? This also raises the question whether those to be emancipated should actually have the ambition to catch up. Should slaves actually aim to become equal to their masters? Should women actually aim to become equal to men – or is Timothy Leary right that women who seek to be equal to men lack ambition? And, more seriously, if we conceive of the aim of emancipation in these terms, isn't there a risk – a risk Freire has been very aware of – that the oppressed become the new oppressors?

If that is so, could there be a reason to start somewhere else and see the trajectory of emancipation differently? This is the option that can be found in the work of Jacques Rancière. Rancière's views on emancipation – which I have discussed elsewhere in more detail (Biesta 2010c; Bingham & Biesta 2010) – do indeed start from the observation that the one “who assumes inequality and proposes to reduce it” can only succeed in setting up “a hierarchy of inequalities (...) “and will produce inequality ad infinitum” (Rancière 2004, p.52). The issue for Rancière, therefore, is not to see how we can think of trajectories that bring us closer to future equality, but rather to think emancipation from a different starting point, not the assumption of *inequality* but the assumption of what he describes as the “equality of all speaking beings” (Rancière 1991, p.39). Let me briefly try to explain what Rancière has in mind.

Rancière characterises emancipation as “escaping from a minority” (Rancière 1995, p.48). Although this could be read as a formal definition of emancipation as it refers to ending a situation in which one is a minor, the use of the word ‘escape’ signals a different dynamics

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from the one outlined above since it associates emancipation with an activity of the one who 'achieves' emancipation rather than that it is understood as something that is done to somebody. Rancière does indeed write that "nobody escapes from the social minority save by their own efforts" (ibid.). Emancipation is, however, not simply about the move from a minority position to a majority position. It is not a shift in membership from a minority group to a majority group. For Rancière emancipation rather entails a "rupture in the order of things" (Rancière 2003, p.219) – a rupture, moreover, that makes the appearance of subjectivity possible or, to be more precise, a rupture that *is* the appearance of subjectivity. In this way emancipation can be understood as a process of *subjectification*, that is, of becoming a (political) subject.

Rancière provides a rather technical definition of subjectification as "the production through a series of actions of a body and a capacity for enunciation not previously identifiable within a given field of experience, whose identification is thus part of the reconfiguration of the field of experience" (Rancière 1999, p.35). There are two things that are important in this definition. The first is the supplementary nature of subjectification. Subjectification is not about taking up an existing identity – and in this sense it is not about becoming part of or becoming included in an existing 'majority' (see also Biesta 2007) – but about the appearance of a way of being that had no place and no part in the existing order of things. Subjectification is supplementary to the existing order because it adds something to this order; and precisely for this reason the supplement also *interrupts* the existing order.

Subjectification – and this is the second point – is therefore highly political as it intervenes in and reconfigures the existing order of things. With regard to this Rancière makes a distinction between two concepts: *police* (or police order) and *politics*. In a way that is reminiscent of Foucault, Rancière defines police as "an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, and that sees that those bodies are assigned by name to a particular place and task" (Rancière 1999, p.29). It is an order "of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise" (ibid.). 'Politics' then refers to "the mode of acting that perturbs this arrangement," Rancière 2003, p.226) and that does so in the name of or with reference to equality. Politics thus refers to "an extremely determined activity

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antagonistic to policing: whatever breaks with the tangible configuration whereby parties and parts or lack of them are defined by a presupposition that, by definition, has no place in that configuration." (ibid., pp. 29-30). This break is manifest in a series of actions "that reconfigure the space where parties, parts, or lack of parts have been defined." (ibid., p.30) Political activity so conceived is "whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it. (...) It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise." (ibid) Politics thus refers to the event when two 'heterogeneous processes' meet: the police process – which, according to Rancière, is always and necessarily an expression of inequality – and the process of *equality* (see ibid.). Rancière gives the example of Jeanne Deroin who, in 1849, presented herself as a candidate for a legislative election in which she cannot run. Through this "she demonstrates the contradiction within a universal suffrage that excludes her sex from any such universality" (Rancière 1999, p.41). It is the staging "of the very contradiction between police logic and political logic," the logic of equality, that makes this into a political act and hence an act of emancipation.

Rancière thus outlines a conception of emancipation that centres on what he refers to as the *verification* of the assumption of the equality. In this view equality is not the anticipated outcome of emancipation but rather its starting point. One could say that Rancière brings equality into the here and now, but it is important to see that he does *not* do so by claiming that equality has already arrived – which would be utterly naïve – but by conceiving of politics as an emancipatory process aimed at the verification of this assumption through acts that stage a contradiction between the (unequal) socio-political order and the assumption of equality. Verification, in this context, is not about proving the truth of the assumption of equality but about "seeing what can be done under that supposition" (Rancière 1991, p.46) – it is, more literally, about making this supposition true through one's actions. Just as with Foucault, and unlike in the monological and dialogical approach, emancipation thus ceases to be a process that is 'driven' by learning. Rancière even goes as far as to say that there is no need to learn that we are equal. Rather than to think of equality and inequality as two different states, he refers to them as "two 'opinions,' that is to say two different axioms" and argues that "(a)ll one can do is verify the axiom one is given" (Rancière 2010, p.4). Taking this one step further, he even argues for the importance of a certain ignorance or, more actively, a *refusal* of the very identity we are being given by others (see also Biesta 2011a). To "escape

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from a minority" is therefore precisely the moment where we no longer identify with the way we are positioned and identified by others but act on the basis of the assumption of equality.

Discussion

In this paper I have tried to show that the modern 'logic' of emancipation – both in its monological and its dialogical form – is based on the assumption that it is possible to generate a true account of our objective condition, either in order to expose the workings of power and the way in which power works upon our understanding of our situation (a main thrust of the monological tradition) or in order to identify what true, unalienated and unoppressed human existence is (a main thrust of the dialogical tradition). In addition I have tried to make clear that along both lines emancipation is seen as a process that leads us from a state of inequality – the inequality between those who know and those who do not know or whose knowledge is distorted; the inequality between the oppressors and the oppressed – to a state of equality. I have used insights from Foucault in order to challenge the idea that power and knowledge can be thought of as separate – as this appears to be required if the ambition is to use knowledge to expose and overcome power – and have shown how Foucault thus recasts emancipation as a process of transgression. Transgression is not to be understood as an escape from power but as a reconfiguration of power/knowledge that is an escape from determination, an escape from taken-for-grantedness. Transgression is an act of refusal that makes different ways of doing and being possible. I have used insights from Rancière in order to challenge the idea that emancipation is to be understood as a trajectory that leads us from inequality to equality in order to highlight that if we 'stage' emancipation in this way there is a real risk that we will never be able to reach the envisaged stage of equality but will forever be caught in the very inequalities we seek to overcome. That is why Rancière suggests that we rather starts from the different assumption, that is the assumption of the equality of all speaking beings and see emancipation as an act of verification – not a verification aimed at proving the truth of this assumption but a verification in the more literal sense of making this assumption true (the Latin words 'veritas' and 'facere'), that is, acting *as if* it were true and "seeing what can be done under that supposition" (Rancière 1991, p.46). When we act in such a way we stage a contradiction – or in Rancière's vocabulary a 'dissensus' – between the existing socio-political

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order and the principle of equality. This is emancipatory, but *not* because it is orientated towards the inclusion of excluded in the existing socio-political order, but because it is an interruption of the existing order with the potential for transformation. It has the potential to bring about a different 'distribution of the sensible,' a different set of subject-positions – and in precisely this sense emancipation is not a process of taking up existing identities but of generating new subjectivities. It is a process of subjectification. The idea from Foucault and Rancière discussed in this paper are therefore significant, so I wish to suggest, because they not only highlight problems inherent in the modern 'logic' of emancipation but also provide concrete suggestions for understanding and – more importantly – for doing emancipation differently. Both make emancipation into something that is more practical and more experimental – and therefore also more uncertain in its processes and outcomes. From an educational point of view perhaps the most interesting aspect of these ideas is that it positions learning differently. Unlike what can be seen as a major line of thought in the modern 'logic' of emancipation, it is no longer so that we need to learn – need to discover some truth about ourselves and our condition – in order to become emancipated. If there is something to learn in relation to emancipation, so we might conclude, it is about what we can learn *from* engagement in the always open and always uncertain experiments of transgression and dissensus.

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